

ROBERT ALTMAN'S FILM: "A WEDDING"  
(VOICED PIECE IN APE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE SIXTEENTH NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL HAS OPENED AT LINCOLN CENTER WITH AN AMERICAN FILM - ROBERT ALTMAN'S "A WEDDING." HERE WITH A LOOK AT THAT PICTURE IS V.O.A.'S ALICE RICHMAN:  
VOICE:

IN "A WEDDING," ROBERT ALTMAN CONTINUES ON HIS CHOSEN PATH OF SHAKING UP SOME TAKEN-FOR-GRANTED VALUES IN AMERICAN SOCIETY. AND HE DOES IT WITH A FAIR DEGREE OF SUCCESS. A YOUNG GIRL FROM A NEWLY-RICH SOUTHERN FAMILY MARRIES A BOY FROM THE MID-WEST. HIS FAMILY IS EQUALLY WEALTHY BUT IT SITS SOMEWHAT HIGHER ON THE SOCIAL SCALE. APPEARANCE IS EVERYTHING. THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY IS PERFORMED TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF TRUMPET AND CHOIR. THE WEDDING VOWS ARE ADMINISTERED BY A BISHOP, WHO THOUGH UNDENIABLY DISTINGUISHED, IS ALSO SENILE. A RECEPTION IS HELD AT THE GROOM'S FAMILY MANSION. AND IT IS THERE THAT THE FILM CRACKS OPEN. WHAT BEGINS AS A VERY FUNNY PICTURE FULL OF COMIC SITUATIONS AND ABSURD BEHAVIOR NOW BECOMES SOMETHING OF A DARK AND EVEN BRUTAL SATIRE.

THE GROOM'S MOTHER IS A DRUG ADDICT GETTING HER SUPPLIES FROM THE FAMILY DOCTOR. HE IS AN ALCOHOLIC. ON THE BRIDE'S SIDE THERE IS A FATHER WITH INCESTUOUS YEARNINGS, A MOTHER ON THE EDGE OF AN AFFAIR AND A SISTER WHO IS PREGNANT BY ONE OF THE GROOM'S TWENTY SCHOOL MATES. THE CATERING COMPANY HIRED TO ORGANIZE THE RECEPTION IS SIMILARLY POPULATED. THROUGHOUT IT ALL, ALTMAN KEEPS HIS CAMERA MOVING, CAPTURING A FEW LINES OF DIALOGUE HERE, A SUDDEN CHANGE OF EXPRESSION THERE. THE ACTING IS FIRST RATE - A TRIUMPH OF ENSEMBLE PLAYING BY A GROUP OF ACTORS WHO HAD NEVER WORKED TOGETHER BEFORE. CAROL BURNETT IS

ESPECIALLY EFFECTIVE AS THE MOTHER OF THE BRIDE. OTHERS INCLUDE VITTORIO GASSMAN, LILLIAN GISH, DINA MERRILL, HOWARD DUFF AND GERALDINE CHAPLIN. A CONSENSUS OF NEW YORK CRITICS AGREE THAT "A WEDDING" SHOWS OFF ROBERT ALTMAN'S BRILLIANCE AS A FILMMAKER. BUT THE FILM ITSELF IS SERIOUSLY FLAWED, IT OFFERS A CIRCUS OF DEVIANT BEHAVIOR UNRELIEVED BY ANY HUMAN SYMPATHY. THERE IS VERY LITTLE HAPPINESS AT THIS WEDDING AND EVEN THE TRAGEDY IS UNFELT.

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BML/RD